

**Media Release**

**4 October 2018**

## **Flying Doctor Speech Therapy helps Mallee kids find their voice**

Despite 30% of Australians living in rural areas, only 4.5% of speech pathology practitioners provide services to rural communities.

In partnership with Robinvale District Health Service and Mallee Track Health & Community Service, the Royal Flying Doctor Service will celebrate the launch of Flying Doctor Speech Therapy on Wednesday 10 October, at 1.00pm. The service provides children (aged 0–12 years) with access to local speech therapy services in Ouyen, Robinvale, Sea Lake, Murrayville and Underbool.

Language delay during early childhood can have a long-term impact, effecting literacy, quality of life, mental health and social opportunity.

“Australian teachers report 1 in 5 school students have a language difficulty when they commence school,” said RFDS Victoria Chief Executive Scott Chapman. “Flying Doctor Speech Therapy will give early intervention and assistance to help Mallee children have the best start possible.”

“This service provides speech therapy to children in areas where access has previously been limited,” said Lyndal Munro, Director of Community Service, Mallee Track Health & Community Services.

Via an initial appointment at a local health clinic, a speech pathologist will assess the child’s needs and develop a plan to support their speech development. The speech pathologist will then work with local qualified allied health assistants to support Mallee children to achieve their speech and language goals.

These ongoing appointments will be held via both face-to-face and the secure Flying Doctor Telehealth service.

Early education workers at schools and centres will also be provided with training to assist in identifying children with speech and language needs. The training will ensure early education staff are confident in referring children and families to the service and in supporting their speech journey.

**Launch details:** Mallee Track Health & Community Service  
Wednesday 10 October, 1.00pm at 28 Britt Street, Ouyen  
**Photo opportunities from 1.00pm:** Patient & speech therapist  
**Interviews available from 1.30pm**

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**ABOUT THE RFDS:**

The Flying Doctors has been voted as Australia's most reputable charity for seven years in a row and has been providing aero-medical assistance and primary health care services since 1928. RFDS Victoria delivers air and road patient transport, primary health care programs such as telehealth, mobile eye and dental care, a rural women's GP service, as well as raising funds for emergency retrieval across Australia.

Nationally the RFDS comes into contact with more than 330,000 patients annually, and performs around 37,000 aeromedical evacuations and conducts more than 16,000 healthcare clinics per year.